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REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE HARBOR AND SHIPPING

OF THE

Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York

ON THE BILL PENDING IN CONGRESS ENTITLED A

*"Bill to Promote the Commerce and Increase the
Foreign Trade of the United States and to Pro-
vide Auxiliary Cruisers, Transports and Seamen
for Government Use when Necessary."*

PRESENTED TO AND ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER FEBRUARY 1, 1900.

NEW-YORK:

PRESS OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

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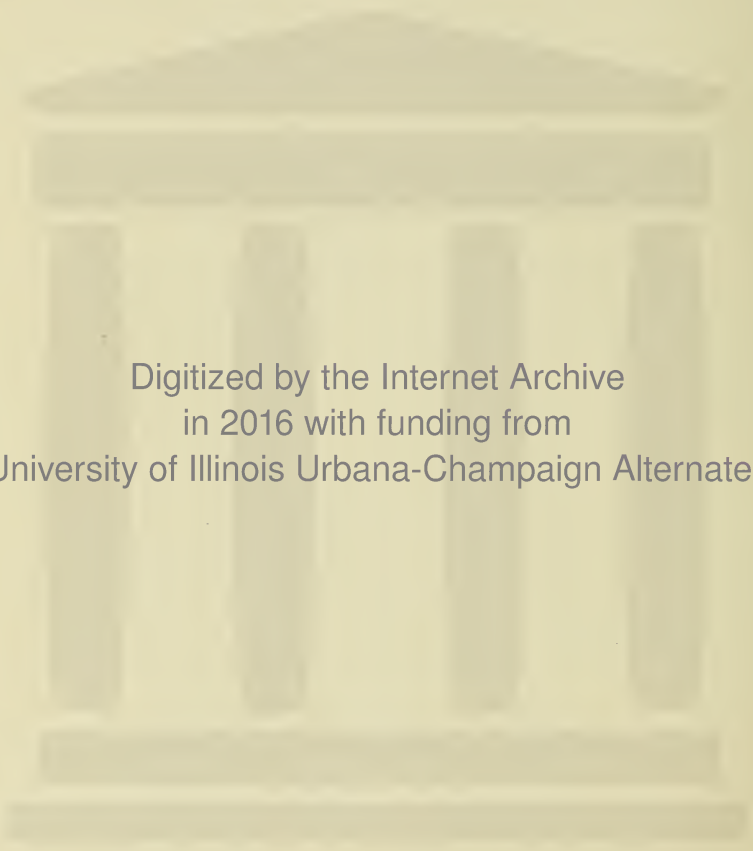
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REPORT.

To the Chamber of Commerce:

Your Committee on the Harbor and Shipping, to which was referred Bill H. R. 64, entitled "A Bill to promote commerce and increase the foreign trade of the United States and to provide auxiliary cruisers, transports and seamen for Government use, when necessary," has had the matter under its most careful consideration, and beg to report:

That this is the third time that the subject matter of this Bill, viz., "the decline in our mercantile marine," has, during the present generation, been referred to this Committee, viz., in 1882, 1885, and at this time. In each of the two preceding instances, quite full and exhaustive reports were made showing the causes which had led to this decline and the possible remedies to be applied. No action was then or has been since taken by Congress in connection with this subject, and now, a third time, are we presented with the query: Shall we now adopt any steps to restore the American mercantile marine or not? And in this latter event continue on in our former mood of inaction and accept all the results therefrom, which past experience most clearly indicates will follow. We know that the brief hours devoted to business by the members of the Chamber are so crowded with momentous and pressing questions of each individual's concerns, that we cannot expect the study of any public question requiring time and application to grasp its true import—unless the subject directly affects their personal interests. Hence we feel the more deeply the responsibility placed upon us as a Committee, to whom you have always paid the kindest respect and deference to our views. We have first deemed it only courteous to call the personal attention of each and every member of the Chamber to the Bill in question, by sending to each a circular letter, containing an accurate summary of the Bill, not too long to

be read even by a very busy man, and have invited expressions of individual judgment of the Bill.

Let us for a moment recall our experience :

First. Our civil war awoke us to the consciousness that we had no navy and no means of protection or of effectively carrying out the existing laws of the Union, and in our first report in 1882, we showed that the actual monetary loss from this cause was not less than one thousand millions of dollars, the prolongation of the war at least twice or three times the duration it would have had under proper conditions of defence and aggression, and the additional incalculable loss of life from such prolongation

Second. The first surrender and transfer of our shipping to foreign flags and a continuous state of inaction during the next twenty years lost to the United States so much of its foreign carrying trade, that we had sunk from carrying 75 per cent. of it before the war, to in 1885, carrying anything less than 20 per cent.

Third. Our report of 1885 shows conclusively that this result can in no wise be attributed to a "protective tariff," but was a normal result to us of a free and unrestricted foreign carrying trade thrown open to the world, and likewise due to the fact that not a measure was adopted by this Government to foster or preserve this valuable heritage, whilst other nations wisely acquired it by mail compensations, direct subsidies, under various "aliases," and every possible enactment that was required to effect this end.

Fourth. That this statement has been since still further confirmed and its folly emphasised by the years which have since elapsed, and during which the same "let alone" policy has been permitted, and now the statement is made that in 1898 we carried in American bottoms the pitiful total of 8 per cent. of our foreign commerce.

And all this in view of the fact that the bulk of this trade is many times increased—it now reaching to the enormous total of two thousand millions of dollars in value per annum. It is estimated that the freights which are yearly paid on this traffic with passage money will nearly average two hundred millions per annum. If it has been even one hundred and fifty millions, the gigantic and almost inconceivable sum of five thousand millions of dollars has been poured into the pockets of foreign ship-owners, to their encouragement and enrichment, whilst if by any possible expedient

or legislation it could have come into this country, or one-half of it, its mere use to the citizens of the United States would be equal, at 6 per cent. for the period named, to a total of nearly one thousand six hundred millions of dollars, or a yearly sum of four and one-half millions. Whilst the disbursement of so considerable a sum of money in the various channels from which the maintenance of a mercantile marine is had, would have vastly increased industries and contributed employment to labor in these industries.

Such has been the loss to the United States.

Let us see what the rest of the world has been doing in this time. If any one wishes to get an accurate, well informed judgment on this whole subject, let him get a copy of the remarkable report of the United States Commissioner of Navigation, made for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1899, a most voluminous and exhaustive document, your Committee can only make a few extracts therefrom, and beg that all who take an intelligent interest in the subject will read that report. Here follows the Commissioner's analysis of foreign steam tonnage, comparing its condition in 1873-74, and the year 1898-99 :

COUNTRY.	YEAR 1873-4.		YEAR 1898-9.		INCREASE. Per. Cent.
	Tonnage.	Per Cent.	Tonnage.	Per Cent.	
Great Britain,.....	2,624,431	60.4	10,993,111	58.5	311.
United States,.....	483,040	11.2	810,800	4 2	68.
France,.....	316,765	7.4	952,682	5.1	200.
Germany,.....	204,894	4.8	1,625,521	8 3	693.
Spain,.....	138,675	3.3	520,847	2.7	275.
Italy,.....	85,045	1.9	420,880	2.2	395.
Holland,.....	72,753	1.7	363,200	1.9	399.
Russia,.....	67,522	1.6	358,415	1.8	430.
Norway,.....	41,602	.9	628,493	3.3	1,410.
Japan,.....	439,509	2.3
All others,.....	293,496	6 8	1,773,674	9.5	504.
Total,	4,328,193		18,887,132		336.

During this period the world's sail tonnage has decreased from 14,200,000 tons to 8,700,000. Here is certainly a startling schedule well worthy of study. The very able Commissioner of Navigation has not hesitated to make a very careful analysis of each item. The Commissioner states the following facts :

First. All the ten countries named, except the United States, have adopted the Free ship system, and admit to registry vessels built in other countries. Great Britain, in fact, rarely admits vessels built elsewhere, as she builds more cheaply at home.

Second. Nearly all the countries named, except the United States, can operate vessels at a lower cost (excluding factors based on first cost, such as depreciation, insurance and interest) than can Great Britain.

Third. All the countries named, whether under free trade or protection, except the United States and Norway, have for some years, and for some purpose, consistently pursued some method of government assistance and contribution to shipping.

Fourth. All the countries named, except the United States (until 1891) and the neutral Powers, Holland and Norway, have regarded the merchant marine as a source of national strength, and as such entitled to national consideration.

Fifth. All the countries named, except the United States, have regarded the merchant marine as a source of national wealth and a share of the ocean carrying trade as an object to be sought, and not to be abandoned when once secured.

Now note just here that Great Britain, from the moment she discovered that she had within her own bowels the material for ship building, has, by huge and liberal contracts for men of war, created great plants wherein vessels of steel and iron can be constructed. Next, that by contracts for excessive mail compensation, she has induced private capital to also call upon these plants for a great issue of mercantile vessels, until, from these combined influences, these plants can produce cheaper built vessels than any other nation, and hence we find our wise Commissioner notifying us that the "free ship" policy means solely to buy our ships of Great Britain. And he shows conclusively that all the foreign built vessels admitted to national registry by the countries named above have come from Great Britain alone; and that, in every instance, when such policy of free ships has been adopted it was necessarily accompanied or soon followed by legislation designed to promote domestic ship building by the aid of that government. And even with all such legislation in 1899 out of 5,715 sea-going steamers built in the world, four-fifths of them were constructed in Great Britain.

So that buying free ships in the cheapest market, even aided by the wisest possible legislation adduced to accomplish the object, did not establish home building of similar vessels.

The above analysis of ship building also calls attention to another feature, and that is that out of the 5,715 steel steamships built in Great Britain, 1,838 were navigated under foreign flags instead of remaining under the British flag.

In the case of Spain, British vessels were placed under the Spanish flag to enable them to engage in the Spanish coasting and the Colonial trade ; and that privilege had a sufficient money value to induce British capital to transfer vessels to the Spanish flag.

In the case of Norway, whose growth in merchant marine is phenomenal and without precedent, she has acquired vessels built in Great Britain, and has had an almost equal number transferred to her flag still owned by British subjects. This is because, by Norwegian law, the vessel can load to a deep water line and can be manned by a smaller crew than either under German or British flag. Norway abounds in good seamen, and has no need to have any legislation on that subject ; they live frugally, and their wages are fully one-third less than on British vessels. The "free ship" policy does not, therefore, explain the growth of Norwegian merchant marine, and no other country can safely follow her footsteps, for it is bound up and dependent on British legislation which she does not follow, and the manning of Norwegian vessels with a lesser number of crew and lower relative wages.

In Germany substantially the same considerations prevail. The German law gives to her ship-owners the widest latitude in the selection of crews. No test of nationality is imposed on master, officers or crew, and the empire has stimulated national shipbuilding and navigation by liberal enactment.

A vessel is permitted under German law to carry 15 per cent. more cargo than under the British flag, and with smaller crew and at much less wages.

In France, vessels built anywhere are admitted to free registry ; this admits foreign built vessels by being placed under the flag to engage in coasting and colonial trade ; this practically places a premium on foreign built vessels in the coasting trade, and at the same time only allows one-half of the navigation bounty to foreign built vessels in the foreign trade. Domestic vessels had, therefore, only advantage of half of the bounty in foreign trade, and none whatever in the coasting trade.

This conclusion is, therefore, drawn :

On the surface, "free ship" policy is buying vessels from Great Britain ; whether such a policy will or can be adopted is dependent

on a number of other conditions, partly natural, partly artificial ; it would be the only course for nations which cannot produce steel on a large scale, as Italy, Japan and others.

It is a natural course for nations with a large seafaring population, with low wages, like the Scandinavians.

It is a reasonable course for a country like Germany, with large ambitions to excel on the sea, linked as the policy has been with cheap labor and intelligently directed Imperial aid to national ship building and navigation.

The Commissioner says in addition : All powers of rank except the United States have acted on the hypothesis that a merchant marine and a ship building industry are essential parts of any system of national defence. No nation has considered the free ship policy alone as adequate to secure to it the desired strength on the ocean. No first-class power has cared to place itself in a position of absolute dependence on the ship building industry of Great Britain. To none of these has there appeared to be any inconsistency in adopting both " Free ship policy," connected with national aid to shipping.

Your Committee would convey to you its sense of the great importance of the Commissioner's able analysis and recapitulation of the constant, continuous and never-failing aid extended by Great Britain to her shipping interests. How, since 1839 up to the present time she has voted sums ranging from 2,500,000 to 6,000,000 dollars annually, for the faster and larger steamships. How she has added to this extra sums for Admiralty subventions for construction, so that guns may be mounted—this year amounting to \$315,900. How she has again and again amended her laws in reference to requirements of nationality of officers and crew to suit British conditions. How she devotes large sums to her naval reserves to train them so as to be qualified to serve on auxiliary cruisers—this year, amounting to \$1,317,000. How she devotes a large sum, \$506,042, to be paid as salaries to those termed Annual Retainers, who are paid to attain a qualification to serve in emergencies, rather than for service. How she also makes rebates of light dues and tonnage taxes to vessels which carry apprentices, amounting to \$150,000 yearly. In fact, he sums it up that it is British policy to promote any phase of British shipping when the necessity for assistance appears.

The Commissioner also most clearly shows how Germany, with the same ends in view, has continuously contributed substantial and material aid to her shipping by subsidies for long periods, by special legislation to aid and encourage ship building by granting large

abatements and rebates for freight transportation of all materials used in ship building, stated to be a very large item, and in various ways supporting and encouraging that industry.

In France it is shown that natural conditions are adverse, that her customs duties on ship building materials are very heavy, and the construction bounties were insufficient to offset the enhanced cost of construction in that country, and that their other provisions, taken together, produced the maximum expenditure from the Treasury with the minimum result to French ship building, and that even a casual review of the fluctuations and inconsistencies of the French methods will show that deductions as to the general results of such a policy, based on French experiments, are wholly inconclusive. We have, therefore, in this very remarkable and able report of the Commissioner, the conclusive and absolute proofs :

1. That "Free Ships" will not by any natural operation create a ship building industry.

2. That it cannot possibly be adopted by any nation with success in competition with the nation that builds the vessel, unless combined with the resources of her own national seamen, and who will serve at equally low wages and under equal laws of every character which relate in any particular to ships and their cargoes.

The United States Government finds its citizens in the present state :

- 1st. Almost entirely without a merchant marine to carry its foreign trade, and is now permitting and relying upon other nations to carry nearly the whole of it—estimated not less than 92 per cent.

- 2d. The United States Government finds itself dependent on foreign vessels for the conveyance of its foreign mails, and at this moment cannot arrange regular and continuous transmissions thereof, by reason of the withdrawal of such large steamers for private use by their individual governments, which may at any moment be additionally complicated by other governments becoming involved in war.

- 3d. The Government is greatly in need of auxiliary steamers, which, by some arrangement or contract, shall be at all times availa-

ble to the Government as transports or cruisers, as was most forcibly evinced in the Spanish war and since, with the measures connected with the Philippine Islands and their inhabitants.

4th. The time has now fully arrived when the industries of the United States can no longer be confined to the limits of the United States and its own citizens, but must seek other markets in the world. And it is a well established fact that such markets cannot possibly be secured and maintained by vessels under a foreign flag and a competing nationality ; such markets will in the end be secured by the nation owning the vessels which carry the products, all other things being equal.

5th. From a neglect of the shipping interest, a very great diminution in the number of available seamen in the United States now exists, and unless something is done to make that avocation desirable, or at least equal to the advantages enjoyed in other pursuits, the diminution will continue until we lose this valuable resource.

6th. The ideal condition of our Republic has been supposed to be that after constructing proper national defences dictated by wise engineering ability—to dispense with a huge standing army, and trust to the national militia to always supply the required service. So after building such portions of the navy as could not be summoned into existence in brief periods, to depend upon the merchant marine for the rapid and effective cruisers and aggressive war vessels more destructive and injurious to the material interests of every enemy with a commerce, than many battleships ; relying upon them to supply to the navy what the militia does to the army. For this service it may be said there exists practically very little, if any at all, at this time.

The Bill before us is intended, and by its title pretends, to supply all these needs. Your Committee find that the Bill is the result of much study and careful construction by a combination of the most respectable and eminent men engaged, and who have formerly been connected with mercantile shipping. It seems well calculated to bring about the results aimed at by its title, and, so far as details are concerned, will undoubtedly undergo such scrutiny and revision by Congress as will perfect the same.

The able Commissioner in his report on what other nations are now doing for merchant shipping, is as follows : Amounts of cur-

rent annual expenditures of nations for subsidies, mail contracts, Admiralty subventions, bounties and other kindred payments :

Great Britain—all items together,.....	\$5,851,525
Germany,.....	1,894,620
France,.....	7,632,242
Italy,.....	2,185,266
Russia,.....	1,371,187
Austria-Hungary,.....	1,724,249
Spain,.....	1,629,927
Portugal,.....	63,300
Netherlands,.....	259,971
Norway,....	136,948
Sweden,.....	31,844
Denmark,.....	82,455
Japan,.....	3,492,107
Total,	\$26,355,641
Total amount paid by the United States,	998,211

The Commissioner also, in a most able and convincing manner, shows that the reasons which impel the governments of other nations to promote their mercantile marine by legislation, apply with equal and greater force to the United States, these reasons being political and commercial. Under the first class, 1st the relations to the navy of the merchant marine as an element in the national defence ; 2d, the relations of a merchant marine to insular territory ; 3d, the relations of a merchant marine to new markets, as those of Asia, Africa and South America. Under the second class, or commercial, 1st, the necessities of ocean mail communication ; 2d, the relations of a national merchant marine to national exports and imports ; 3d, the value of the carrying trade ; 4th, the promotion of shipbuilding and contributory industries.

Your Committee cannot avoid here repeating some of the most forcible of the Commissioner's statements on these points.

a. The relations of the merchant marine as an element of national defence gives to navigation and ship building a claim far in excess of other industries on legislative consideration. Great Britain, with a navy equal to any other three powers combined, deems it necessary to maintain a fleet of 28 auxiliary cruisers, aggregating 186,380 tons, for which, in the form of Admiralty subventions, she gives annually £65,000, or \$325,000. The German contracts with the North German Lloyds has the same end in view. The United States, with a much larger coast line, have

greater need of such vessels than any other power, except Great Britain.

b. The merchant marine must be relied on to furnish the seamen needed in emergency to man war vessels. On their naval reserves, employed in merchant vessels, Great Britain expends annually \$1,250,000, and France and Germany give subsidies for the same avowed purpose.

c. Before, during and since the war with Spain, this country has been found woefully deficient in means of transporting our troops, by no means in large numbers. We have been obliged to purchase transports abroad, and even to charter transports under foreign flags and subject to foreign laws, (*vide* the Tartar, a British vessel bringing American troops from Manila, detained at Hong Kong for failure to observe British regulations). In the war with China, Japan transported by merchant vessels under her own flag larger bodies of troops than the United States has been called on to move at any time during the past two years.

d. Assistance rendered to construction of domestic built vessels re-acts in lowering cost of building naval vessels, and *vice versa*.

2d. The obligation of a nation to furnish suitable means of mail and commercial communication between itself and its insular possessions is everywhere recognized, regardless of the economic theory held by the Government. This recognition is one of the elements of strength of the British Empire. France, Germany, Italy, Holland and Portugal all follow this example, and for many years Spain spent on an average \$1,700,000 to maintain communication between the Colonies and the Peninsula. Whatever may be the future form of government of the Philippines, Porto Rico and Cuba, we are bound to supply now, means of communication by sea at least as good as those furnished by Spain.

3d. Our legitimate interest in the development of the markets of Asia are as great as any European power. Our geographical opportunities for sharing in these markets are superior to those of any European nation. The agencies of six great powers are at work promoting their several desires to possess these, and the most powerful of these is Government support to shipping. To this trade alone these powers grant \$5,000,000, whilst the United States spent \$48,451.

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These facts and arguments are entirely apart from and above the considerations prompting to free trade or protection. They are national rather than commercial, and is not essentially a proposition of government aid to private enterprise.

4th. The commercial reasons, that lead other nations to develop their mercantile shipping, have as much force in this country as elsewhere. First, the overpowering desirability and necessity of carrying the nation's ocean mails in the nation's own vessels, is controlling Great Britain, Germany and France, and convincing facts are shown by the Commissioner to prove it.

5th. The normal proposition that "Trade follows the Flag" is dwelt upon and its value illustrated by a quotation from the President of the P. & O. Co., at an annual meeting two years ago. "Our policy is that a British Company, which is keenly alive to British interests, and I believe, in this respect, we represent the general feeling of the ship owners of the country."

6th. The enormous value of the trade has been heretofore dwelt upon, and must surely be realized by all.

Sufficient has been said, certainly to at least convince any fair mind that our present and past status is anything but desirable, and that if it be possible to devise and adopt any remedy, it should be promptly done. Five measures of legislation have been proposed within recent years, viz. :

First. Discriminating duties, favoring goods carried in American vessels.

Second. Bounties on exports in American vessels.

Third. Free registry for foreign built ships.

Fourth. Mail subsidies to fast steamships.

Fifth. Navigation bounties, based on tonnage, mileage and speed.

The first proposition (discriminating duties) may be at once laid aside. It is in conflict with practically all our commercial treaties, and its adoption would require a readjustment of our trade rela-

tions with the world. It invites retaliation ; it was tried in France in 1872, and abandoned as disastrous within eighteen months.

The second proposition (bounties on exports) is not feasible, as our commercial treaties bind us to pay such bounties to foreign vessels also, if paid to American vessels.

The third proposition (free ships) has been demonstrated herein to be ineffective. The cost of operating vessels in the foreign trade is much greater than under foreign flags, and legislation by Congress during the past few years has increased this disadvantage. The proposition does not profess to and does not in any way benefit the ship building industry.

The fourth and fifth propositions brings us to the Bill in question, which is the result of two years continuous deliberation and study over the matter by the conference of able men hereinbefore mentioned. Its title and preamble sets forth its objects and the results expected to be obtained by its provisions, as follows : A Bill,

First. To promote the commerce and increase the foreign trade of the United States, and to provide auxiliary cruisers, transports and seamen for Government use when necessary ; and

Whereas, The profitable employment of the surplus productive power of the farms, factories, mines, forests and fisheries of the United States imperatively demand the increase of its foreign commerce ; and

Whereas, The merchant vessels, officers, engineers, machinists, electricians and seamen necessary to the increase of the commerce of the United States are also essential as auxiliary to the forces of the United States in time of war and otherwise, and to the better security of the nation and the protection of its possessions ; and

Whereas, It is deemed especially expedient to make immediate provision to these ends ; therefore,

From all that we have presented in the foregoing your Committee have arrived at the conviction that it is now a question of this Bill or nothing. Your Committee have endeavored to elicit intelligent expressions of members' views, either for against the Bill. In this they have failed. The objectors simply indulge in disapproval of the Bill, coupled with the general opposition to sub-

sidies in any shape, and descending thence to vituperation and a declaration that the Bill is a steal and nothing else. In no instance is there an argument entered upon worthy of repetition after reading the foregoing statements, as results of experience and facts. Those members who are opposed to the principle of Protection in any form or degree, can and do with perfect consistency object to subsidies, and hence this Bill—but no one who favors a Protective Tariff enacted to encourage, establish, or maintain any industry in the United States, or who enjoys in his own investments the profit insured to the industries he is interested in—can, with any consistency, oppose this Bill. There is not the slightest difference between profits derived from higher prices exacted from the public by means of a high tariff on the same article when imported and the same amount of money given direct from the Treasury of the United States to a specific industry for its special encouragement. It does not become intelligent citizens to on the one hand approve and sanction a high protective tariff and enjoy all its benefits, and on the other make senseless clamor over a proposition to remedy a national loss and great existing want and deficiency because it takes the form of a subsidy. As merchants and business men we must acknowledge that for many years past the majority of the citizens of the United States have decided in favor of the system of protection, and it has been adopted, and we are living and prospering in a marvellous manner under it, and this Bill is entirely consistent with that prevailing principle. Your Committee, after its very full and careful examination, deem it a very conservative measure limited as to duration and amount; its utmost limit will not be attained for years, and, when attained, is at once reduced in its total by the loss to all vessels receiving pay of all compensation for carrying the mails—equal as estimated to about 20 per cent. of the whole pay—at the present, and for years, the annual amount required will not probably exceed from two and a half to three and a half millions. And in return for the appropriation the Government will at once enter into the command of transports, and soon of rapid mail carriers, an invaluable and indispensable aid to our navy. It is certainly a good investment for the Government as an aid to national defence, whilst it will enable the merchant to avail himself to the full national extent of the new, great and inestimable markets now opening to us in Cuba, Porto Rico, the Philippines and Asia generally. Whatever may be our individual views as to the causes and process which has led up to our present

state, one thing is certain, we now own and control these wonderful possessions in the West and East Indies, and whilst in due time we shall extend to them all the freedom and liberty they prove themselves capable of receiving and maintaining, it will always be preserving the rights and benefits which we have attained at the cost of our nation's blood and money. So that, as has been shown, we owe these possessions and ourselves duties, which can only be performed by such action as this Bill proposes, and your Committee, therefore, cordially recommend its approval by this Chamber, in the form of the following resolution :

Resolved, That this Chamber, after careful consideration of the subject, as evinced by the report this day made by its Committee on the Harbor and Shipping, hereto annexed, do heartily approve the objects sought to be accomplished by Bill H. R. 64, without expressing an opinion on its details.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

(Signed,)	A. FOSTER HIGGINS,	} <i>Of the Committee on the Harbor and Shipping.</i>
	SAMUEL D. COYKENDALL,	
	JOHN H. STARIN,	
	WILLIAM P. CLYDE,	

NEW-YORK, *January 26th*, 1900.

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